MANOR BLACK

FIRE IN THE BLOOD

CULLEN BUNN
BRIAN HURTT
TYLER CROOK

MANOR BLACK™

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DARK HORSE BOOKS

VOLUME TWO
FIRE IN THE BLOOD

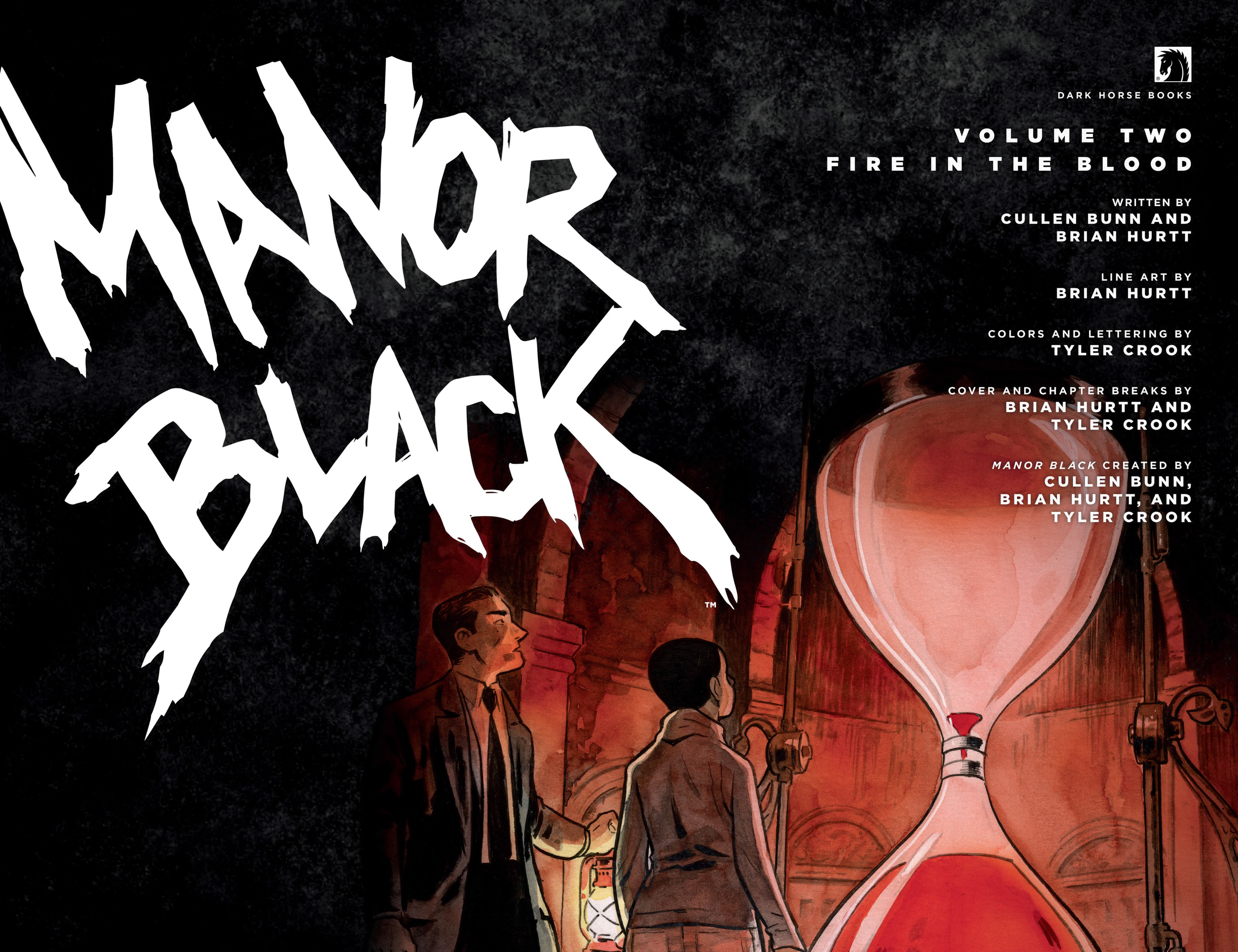
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brian hurtt



"THE TIME HAS PASSED.

"THE DESCENT IS HERE."

FATHER DELAYS THE INEVITABLE.

"OUR ENEMIES ARE AT OUR DOORSTEP.

"AS A FAMILY, WE SHOULD BE SHARP, FOCUSED."

BUT HE HAS DIVIDED US.

PERHAPS HE'S SIMPLY WORRIED, REGINALD.

PERHAPS HE DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE US DURING A TIME OF CRISIS.

I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT, BASIL.

"I TRULY WOULD."

BUT IF HE WANTS TO HELP US...

...TO HELP HIS FAMILY...

"...WHY IS HE SPENDING SO MUCH TIME WITH AN *OUTSIDER?*"

THAT'S IT, ARI.

BREATHE.

LET THE FLAMES FLOW THROUGH YOU.

YOU ARE NOT CONTROLLING THE FIRE.

YOU AND THE FIRE ARE ONE.

I...I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN.

IT'S TOO POWERFUL.

IT ISN'T FIGHTING ME... BUT IT WANTS TO.

ALL THE POWER OF YOUR HOUSE IS CONTAINED WITHIN YOUR FLESH.

THE TOTEM OF FIRE.

BUT DOUBT IS A TOTEM AS WELL.

THE TOTEM OF *FAILURE.*

IT'S SLIPPING--

FWOOSH

AH, YES.

"SHE'S SET THE WOODS ON FIRE AGAIN."

HNF HNF

I JUST... I COULDN'T... IT BURNS TOO HOT.

IT'S LIKE... IT'S COOKING ME FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

CALL IT BACK.

YEAH. ALL RIGHT.

WHATEVER YOU SAY.

SHHW

WUUSH

NNNN--

HOW'S THAT?

HNF

SATISFIED?

WE'LL START AGAIN IN THE MORNING.

FATHER'S LOSING HIS GRIP.

TO RAIL AGAINST THE DESCENT IS TO INVITE DISASTER.

THE HARM HE CAUSES...

"...WILL TAKE A LONG TIME TO HEAL..."

...IF IT EVER HEALS AT ALL.

WE NEED TO TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM.

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING, REGINALD?

WE NEED TO REMIND HIM WHAT'S AT STAKE.

HE ENTERTAINS HIS NEW PLAYMATE ON TIME THAT IS NOT HIS OWN.

MADNESS NIPS AT HIS HEELS.

"FATHER SHOULD KNOW THIS..."

"...PERHAPS BETTER THAN ANYONE."

ROMAN?

IS THAT YOU? I CAN'T TELL.

IS THAT HIM, TALIA?

IT CAN'T BE HIM, ESME. NOT ROMAN.

I MEAN, OUR BROTHER HAS NEVER BEEN SOLDIER MATERIAL.

DON'T WORRY, LADIES.

I'M NOT A SOLDIER ANYMORE.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU BOTH.

IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME.

HELLO, MR. BLACK.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

FROM THE LOOKS OF YOU, ALL THAT CODEBREAKING FOR THE MILITARY HAS DONE YOU RIGHT.

JUST "ROMAN," ALL RIGHT, CHARLES?

JUST TRYING TO SHOW SOME RESPECT TO A MAN IN UNIFORM.

I APPRECIATE IT, BUT WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER TOO LONG FOR SUCH FORMALITIES.

BESIDES--

--"MR. BLACK" IS MY FATHER.

WHAT?

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

IT'S FATHER. HE'S...

HE'S NOT HANDLING THINGS WELL.

ROMAN, YOU NEED TO PREPARE YOURSELF.

FATHER'S PARANOIA IS... *WORSE.*

HE MAY SEE THE TIMING OF YOUR RETURN AS... OPPORTUNISTIC.

DOES HE THINK I ENDED THE WAR?

I WRAPPED IT ALL UP IN SOME SORT OF POWER GRAB?

JUST UNDERSTAND... FATHER MIGHT NOT BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU.

WHEN IS HE EVER, ESME?

WHEN IS HE EVER?













IS THIS...

...WHERE THEY USED TO LIVE?

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?

WHAT COULD HAVE DONE ALL THIS DAMAGE?

PARTS LOOK COLLAPSED.

OTHERS LOOK...

...BURNED.

WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING ME, ROMAN?

ABOUT THIS PLACE. ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

ABOUT MYSELF.

HOME SWEET HOME.

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE BACK, ROMAN.

FATHER?

FATHER-- WE'RE HOME.

ROMAN'S HOME.

...

MAYBE HE'S OUT ON THE GROUNDS SOMEWHERE.

SURE.

ROMAN! YOU'RE BACK!

YOU ARE A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES IF EVER I SAW ONE!

LET ME LOOK AT YOU.

I'VE GOT DINNER COOKING FOR YOU. ALL YOUR FAVORITES.

IT SMELLS AMAZING.

YOU'VE BEEN GONE TOO LONG, ROMAN.

WE'VE ALL MISSED YOU.

WHO'S THIS?

MY SON.

THE WAR HERO.

COME HOME.

AND JUST IN TIME, TOO.

FATHER--

THE EYES CAN'T BE TRUSTED, THOUGH, CAN THEY?

ARE YOU REALLY MY BOY?

OR ARE YOU SOME PRETENDER?

SURELY THERE'S SOME WAY TO BE CERTAIN.

BLEED.

MY SON.

WELCOME BACK.

WE HAVE MUCH TO DISCUSS.

MANY PREPARATIONS TO MAKE.

I DON'T BELIEVE WE'VE HAD THE PLEASURE--

DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM.

HE'S MY GUEST.

AS ARE YOU, ROMAN.

AS ARE YOU ALL.

"WHAT'S EATING YOU ALIVE TODAY, HARV?"

DIXIE Diner

WHAT'S THAT?

SECOND CUP OF THE MORNING.

THAT MEANS YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND.

AND YOU, CUZ, DON'T EVER DWELL ON THE POSITIVE.

DIXIE Diner

THAT'S NOT TRUE, ROSE.

IT MIGHT BE TRUE.

AND YOU'VE BEEN A TWO-TO-THREE-CUPS-A-MORNING KIND OF GUY EVER SINCE YOU BECAME SHERIFF.

MAYBE A BIT MORE PRECISELY-- SINCE YOU HAD YOUR LITTLE ENCOUNTER WITH ROMAN BLACK.

WHAT HAPPENED OUT THERE?

WHAT DO YOU THINK AUNTIE WOULD SAY ABOUT THE CONNECTION...

...THE COLLISION...

...OF THE NATURAL WORLD AND THE UNNATURAL WORLD?

SHE'D LIKELY SAY THERE'S NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO.

I DON'T KNOW.

THE TWO SEEM PLENTY DIFFERENT TO ME.

AND I'M NOT SURE THEY'RE MEANT TO COEXIST.

I KNOW SOMEONE YOU COULD ASK.

WELL, LORELEI BLACK--YOU'RE LATE.

I'VE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE MORNING RUSH--TWO CUPS OF COFFEE, IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT--ALL BY MY LONESOME.

SORRY, ROSE.

AND--AUSTIN DEAN--DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T NOTICED THAT HER TARDINESS HAS ONLY GOTTEN WORSE SINCE SHE STARTED SPENDING TIME WITH YOU.

SORRY, ROSE.

WHO DO YOU THINK HE IS?

H-HELLO?

WHO'S THERE?

IS SOMEONE--

HE'S NOT YOUR FATHER.

REGGIE?

IS THAT YOU?

ARE YOU TRYING TO SCARE ME?

NOT YOUR FATHER.

NOT YOUR FATHER.

NOT YOUR FATHER.

YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT?

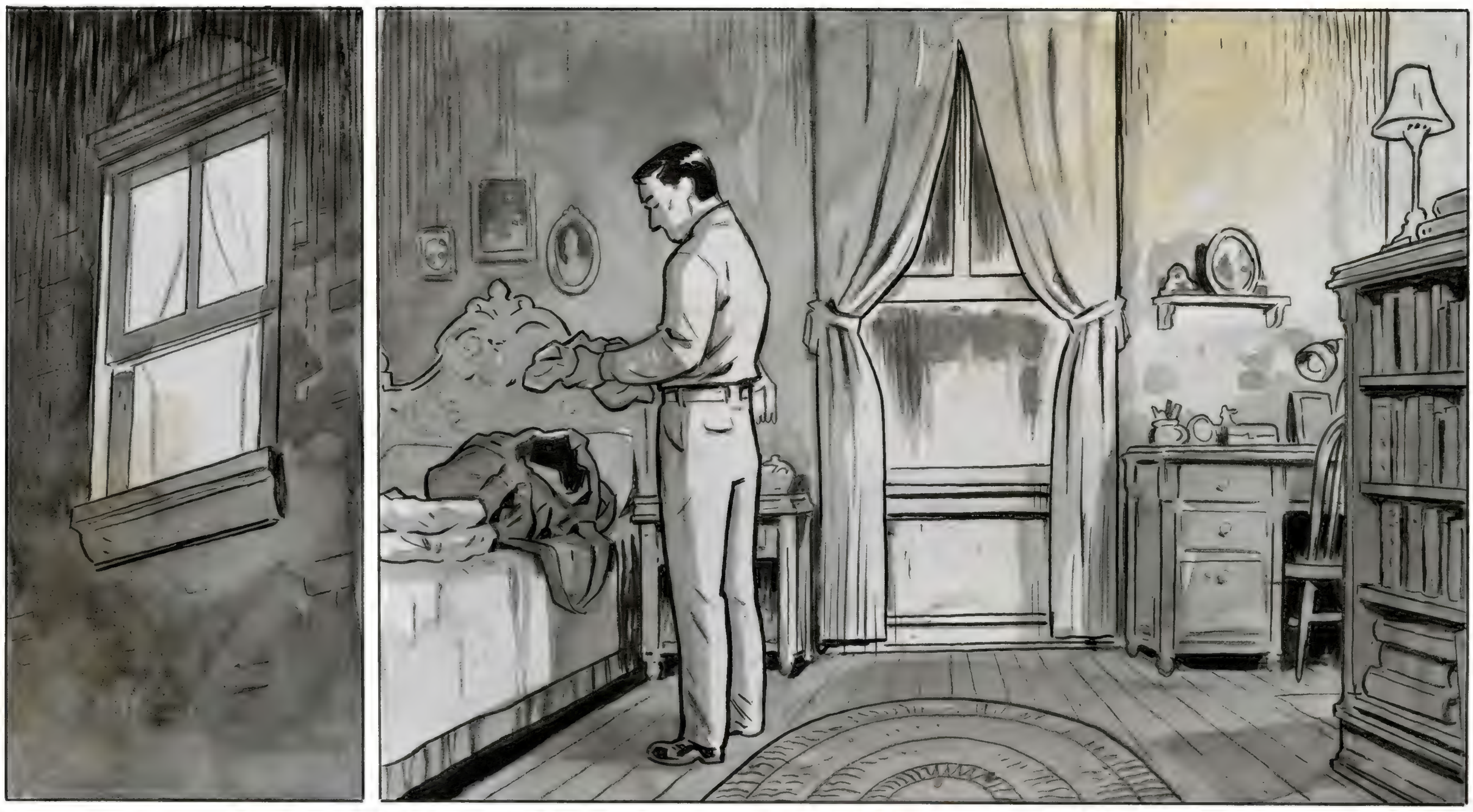
ROMAN'S HELPING ME.

HE'LL BLEED YOU.

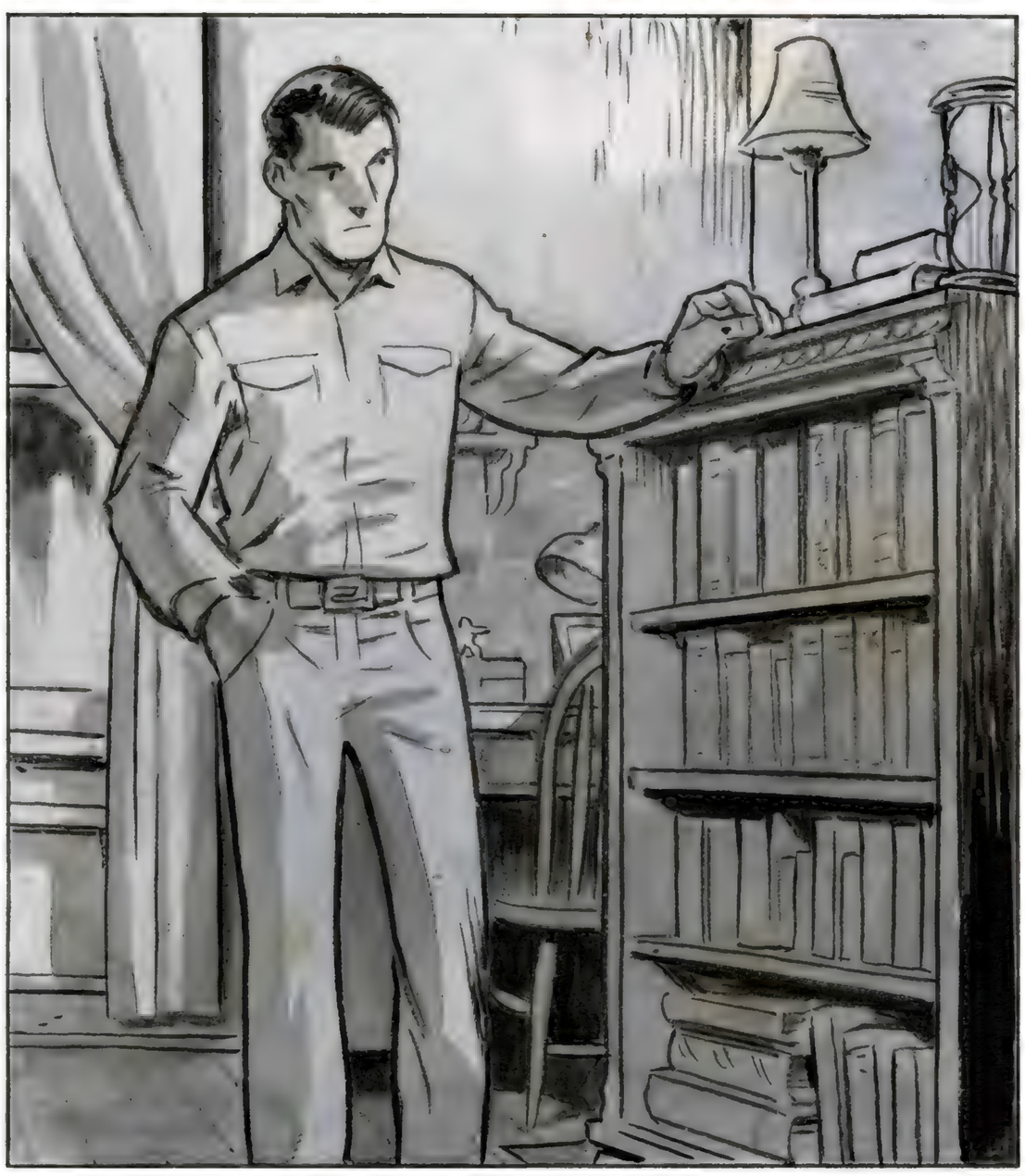
WHO'S THERE?

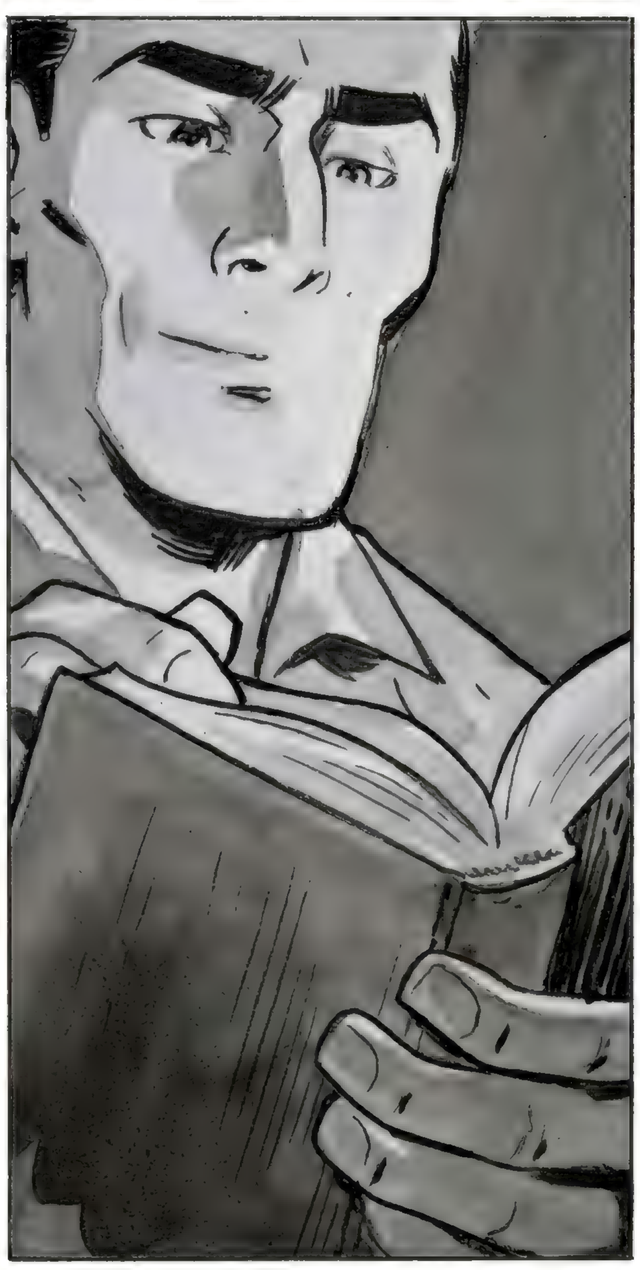
THERE'S FIRE.

FIRE IN THE BLOOD.












YEEEEEAAAARRRRGH!

IT'S ESME--

THE SCREAM CAME FROM HER ROOM!

WHAT'S HAPPENED?

MY GOD! THAT *SCREAM!*

CAREFUL NOW, ROMAN.

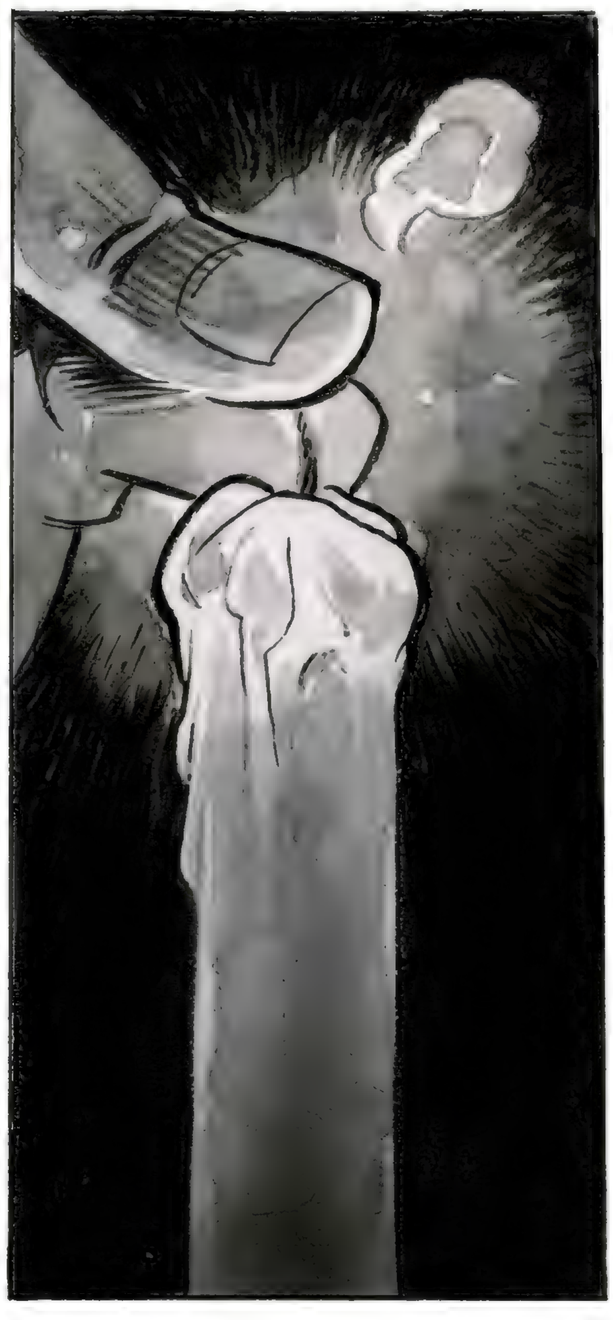
CAREFUL.

ESME?









我在这里



"YOUR FATHER TELLS ME I SHOULD JUST LOOK THE OTHER WAY."

DIXIE Diner

HE SAYS THAT I WON'T LIKE...

...OR EVEN UNDERSTAND...

...WHAT I'LL FIND IF I START DIGGING.

LOOKING THE OTHER WAY...

...IT DOESN'T COME NATURAL TO ME.

THOUGH, I ADMIT, PART OF ME WANTS TO.

IT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA.

IGNORING WHAT'S RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOUR FACE.

I MEAN, WE ALL DO IT EVERY DAY ANYHOW.

THERE'S MAGIC ALL AROUND US.

MOST PEOPLE NEVER NOTICE.

BLISSFUL IGNORANCE...IS AN UNCONSCIOUS ACT.

SOME OF THIS MAGIC...IS DANGEROUS.

IT'S ALL DANGEROUS, SHERIFF.

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T JUST LET IT GO UNCHECKED.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? GO AFTER MY FATHER WITH A SWAT TEAM?

DON'T HAVE THE BUDGET FOR ANYTHING SO FANCY.

SO...DOES AUSTIN KNOW ABOUT YOUR FAMILY?

HE KNOWS THAT WE'RE WEIRD. THAT'S ABOUT IT.

BUT WHAT FAMILY ISN'T?

COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY.

YOU KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM YOUR FATHER.

YOU DON'T LIVE AT THE HOUSE.

YOU STAY HERE IN TOWN.

WHEN I WAS A KID, MY MOTHER TOLD ME A STORY ABOUT A GOBLIN WITH A LONG TAIL.

SHE SAID THE GOBLIN LIVED IN FEAR THAT SOME OTHER CREATURE WOULD COME ALONG AND EAT ITS TAIL.

SO...IT DID WHAT GOBLINS DO.

IT DECIDED TO EAT ITS TAIL ITSELF.

IT STARTED CHEWING ON ITS TAIL...

...AND IT KEPT RIGHT ON CHEWING...

...UNTIL...

...IT JUST POPPED OUT OF EXISTENCE.

SNAP

I FEEL A LITTLE SILLY, BUT IT'S HARD TO TELL THESE DAYS.

IS THAT A TRUE STORY?

THEY'RE ALL TRUE STORIES.

"AND I JUST DON'T WANT TO BE THERE WHEN MANOR BLACK COLLAPSES IN ON ITSELF."

WHAT IS THIS?

WHAT HAPPENED HERE, ROMAN?

WHAT HAPPENED TO ESME?

OUR SISTER HAS BEEN MURDERED.

HER KILLER COULD NOT HAVE GOTTEN FAR.

HE'S CLOSE.

I CAN CATCH HIM.

DON'T!

TALIA--

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE.

I DO.

THE THING THAT KILLED ESME IS OUT THERE.

DON'T FOLLOW IT, ROMAN.

SHE'S RIGHT. YOU CAN'T GO OUT THERE ALONE.

WHATEVER DID THIS...IT MIGHT BE OUT THERE WAITING FOR YOU.

SOMEONE... SHOULD TELL YOUR FATHER.

I'LL GO.

FATHER--

I HEARD A SCREAM.

IT'S ESME.

FATHER-- SHE'S DEAD.

SHE'S BEEN KILLED.

SHOULD I BE CONCERNED, ROMAN?

BECAUSE I AM.

I'M CONCERNED.

YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD YOUR SECRETS.

I KNOW BETTER THAN MOST.

BUT THIS--

THIS?

YOU WASTE TIME TEACHING... THIS GIRL.

SHE ISN'T ONE OF US.

ONE OF OUR SONS SHOULD ASCEND.

AND WHO SAYS THEY WILL NOT?

YOU!

YOU SAY SO!

IF YOU DO NOT JOIN YOUR ANCESTORS, REGINALD WILL NOT—

ARE YOU CERTAIN REGINALD WILL TAKE MY PLACE?

HE'S THE OLDEST.

YOU MEAN YOU'VE HAD THE MOST TIME WITH HIM.

YOU'VE SPENT THE LONGEST MOLDING HIM INTO WHAT YOU WANTED ME TO BE.

HOW DID THIS HAPPEN, ROMAN?

WHAT DID I DO?

WHY HAVE YOU COME TO RESENT ME SO?

WHY ARE YOU SO EAGER TO SEE ME DIE?

I'M NOT.

BUT DEATH...

...THE DESCENT...

...IS THE WAY OF THINGS.

I DON'T MAKE THE RULES, ROMAN.

BUT I UNDERSTAND--

"--THAT THEY CANNOT BE BROKEN."

IT WAS MAGIC, FATHER.

MAGIC KILLED ESME.

THE MAN I SAW WHEN I ARRIVED.

YOUR "GUEST."

HE WAS AN INFERNALIST.

A FLAME MAGE.

WHAT OF IT?

THERE WERE FLAMES.

BURNS.

IN ESME'S ROOM.

SURELY YOU CAN SEE--

VICTOR IS HERE TO HELP US, SON.

I BROUGHT HIM HERE...TO SAVE US.

TO SAVE OUR FAMILY.

BECAUSE YOU MOST CERTAINLY COULDN'T BE BOTHERED TO BE HERE.

HELLO, ROMAN.

I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR SISTER.

I'M VERY SORRY.

SHE WAS ALWAYS KIND TO ME.

THANK YOU.

YOU'RE... ...JASMINE'S DAUGHTER.

DEIDRE, RIGHT?

I WAS JUST A CHILD WHEN YOU WENT AWAY.

I'M SURPRISED YOU REMEMBER.

WELL...

...THANK YOU...

...AGAIN...

THE FIRST FLAME MAGES WERE SLAVES.

DID YOU KNOW THAT?

WHAT?

THEY WERE SLAVES.

SERVANTS.

I MEAN, LONG AGO.

WHEN THE PYRAMIDS OF EGYPT WERE BEING RAISED.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS?

YOU'RE NOT A MAGE.

YOU'RE JUST A GIRL.

THEY PRAYED TO THE SUN GOD FOR THE POWER TO CAST OFF THEIR CHAINS.

THEY MADE SACRIFICES.

THAT'S WHERE THEIR MAGIC COMES FROM.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SACRIFICED?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY BURNED?

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A MAGE TO UNDERSTAND MAGIC.

YOU JUST NEED TO PAY ATTENTION.

AND I'M NOT AS YOUNG AS YOU SEEM TO THINK, ROMAN.

BLOOD.

FATHER KEEPS THE GATES LOCKED UP TIGHT.

AHH!

REGGIE--

I'M SURPRISED HE HASN'T SHOWN YOU AROUND HIMSELF.

MAKES YOU WONDER, DOESN'T IT?

WHAT COULD HE POSSIBLY BE HIDING FROM YOU...

...HIS GOLDEN CHILD?

I'M NOTHING OF THE SORT.

HE'S HELPING ME.

THAT'S ALL, REGGIE.

REGINALD.

YEAH, WHATEVER.

I'VE HAD JUST ABOUT ENOUGH OF YOU TRYING TO SCARE ME OFF.

HM?

WHAT ARE YOU GOING ON ABOUT?

I KNEW THAT WAS YOU.

SKULKING ABOUT.

OFFERING YOUR DIRE WARNINGS.

IT WASN'T ME.

I SWEAR.

I ARRIVED ONLY A FEW MINUTES AGO.

THERE ARE GHOSTS HERE.

WHAT IS THAT?

I'LL GIVE YOU THREE GUESSES.

BUT I BET YOU CAN GET IT IN ONE.

CARE TO DESCEND?

WHAT DO YOU SAY, ARI?

K-CLICK



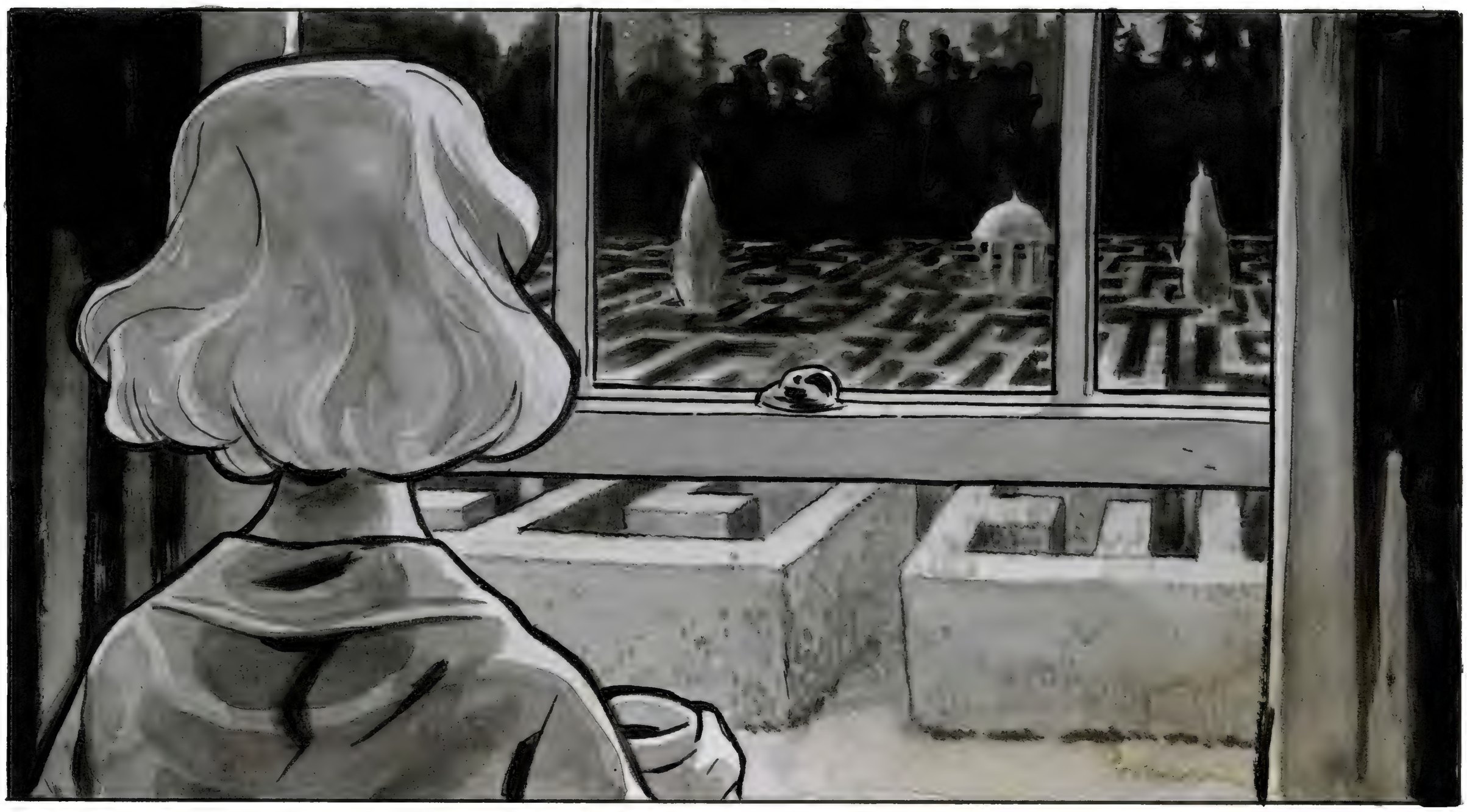









PLIP








HM.






FATHER?



I KNOW YOU'RE OUT HERE.

I PERFORMED A DIVINATION.

I THINK WE NEED TO TALK.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND--

OH!

FATHER?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHY ARE YOU SMILING LIKE THAT?

YOU...YOU'VE BETRAYED US.

YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON YOUR FAMILY.

THE DESCENT IS UPON YOU, YET YOU REFUSE YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

COME ON OUT OF THERE.

I CAN'T JUST LET--

AAAAAAHHHHH!

THUP

NO!

WHAT IN THE NAME OF--

NOOO!

IT'S NOT HIM!

THE BLOOD!

MY BLOOD-- LIED!

AAHH--

HGGGK!

GGGKK

GRK












SHERIFF

A FIRE!

WHAT'S GOING ON, ROMAN?

WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE?

THE HEDGE MAZE!

ALL OF YOU... STAY BACK.

TALIA.

"THIS IS A PLACE OF GREAT TRAGEDY, YOU KNOW."

WELL... MAYBE YOU DON'T.

YOU HAVE A WAY OF STUMBLING INTO THINGS YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND.

I DIDN'T "STUMBLE" ANYWHERE, REGGIE.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO BROUGHT A KEY, REMEMBER?

REGINALD.

MY FATHER IS THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER COMES OUT HERE.

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S USED THE LANTERN IN AGES.

THERE'S NO OIL.

I SUPPOSE HE PREFERS THE--

FWOOSH

THANK YOU.

DON'T MENTION IT.

AS YOU WISH, ARI.

WHAT WERE YOU SAYING ABOUT A TRAGEDY?

YES, YES.

FATHER DOESN'T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT IT.

BUT BLOOD IS SO MUCH STRONGER THAN SECRETS.

YOU'RE REALLY PLAYING UP THAT WHOLE "MASTER OF ESOTERIC MYSTERIES" THING, AREN'T YOU?

HM. I SUPPOSE SO.

THE CRYPTS ALWAYS BRING THAT OUT IN ME.

THERE ARE GHOSTS HERE.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME.

I HEARD THEM. OUT NEAR THE OLD HOUSE.

THAT DECREPIT PILE OF SCORCHED, ROTTING WOOD WAS ONCE THE SEAT OF MY FAMILY'S POWER.

I LIKE THE OTHER HOUSE BETTER. IT'S NOT SO CLOSE TO THE CRYPTS.

MAGICIANS DON'T CARE ALL THAT MUCH ABOUT PROPERTY VALUES.

WHEN MY FATHER RETURNED FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR, EVERYTHING CAME CRASHING DOWN.

THE MANOR BURNED.

NOT LONG AFTER, A NEW HOUSE WAS RAISED.

BUT THE TRUE POWER REMAINED.

IT'S... FULL OF BLOOD.

THAT'S RIGHT.

THE BLOOD OF MY ANCESTORS.

DATING BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS.

THE BLOOD OF YOUR ANCESTORS, TOO.

IN A WAY.

AFTER ALL, FATHER GAVE YOU HIS BLOOD.

"NOT YOUR FATHER."

WHAT'S THAT?

THE VOICES I HEARD...

...THE GHOSTS...

...THEY WANTED ME TO KNOW...

...THAT I DON'T BELONG.





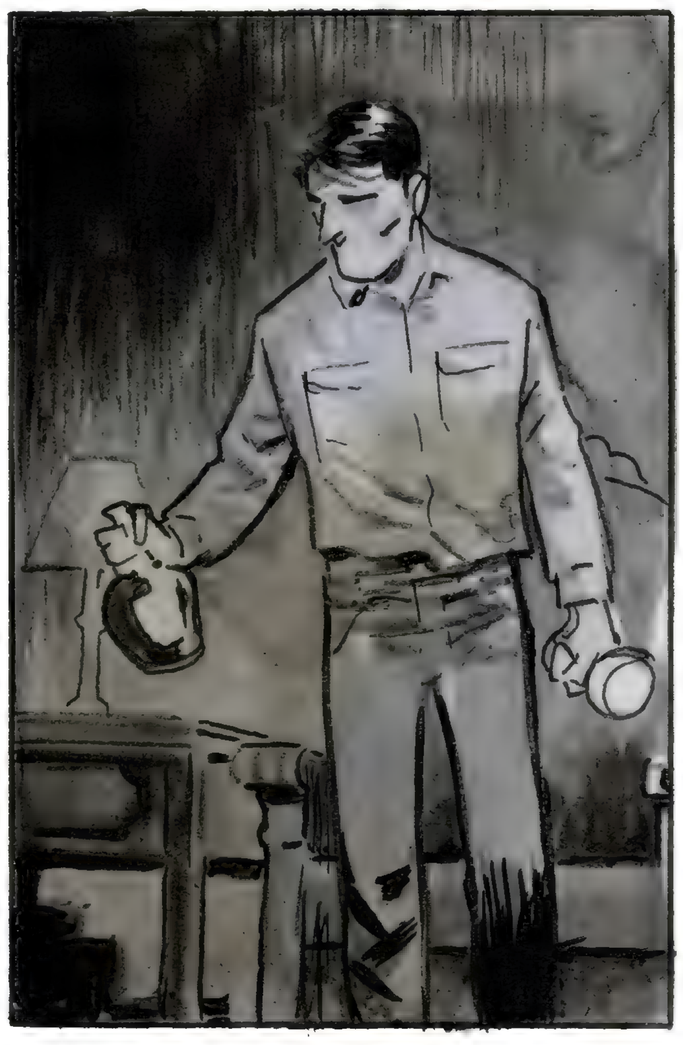


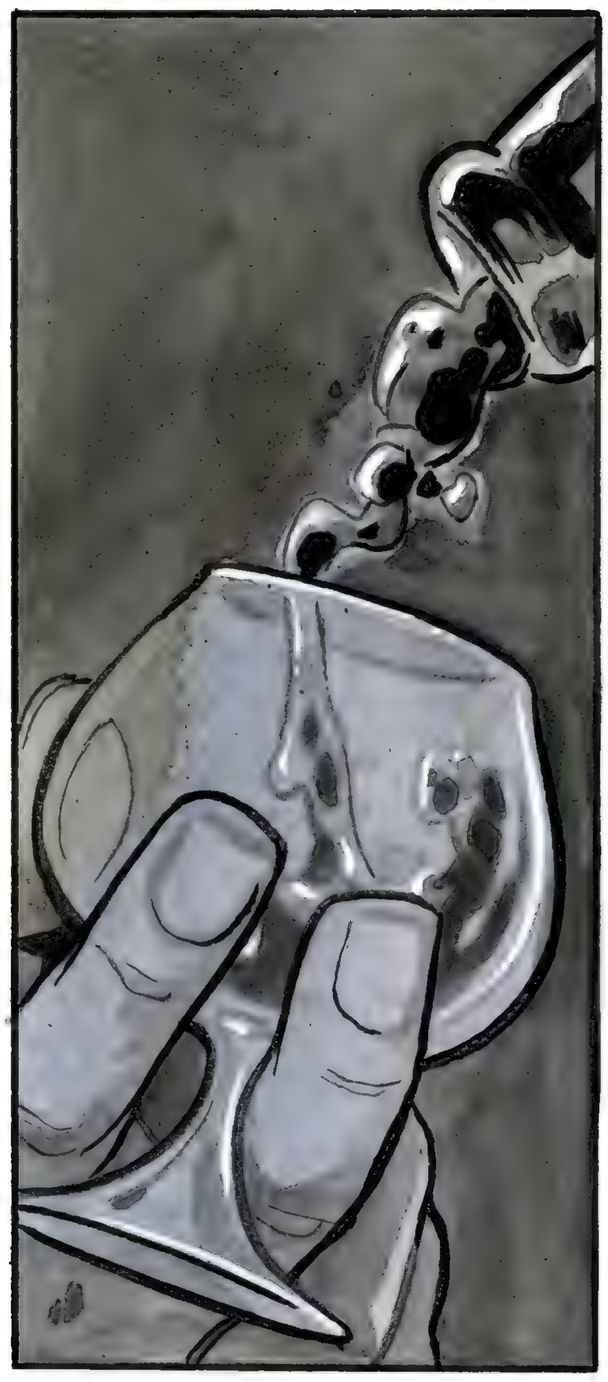
























DON'T FOLLOW ME.

YOU THINK YOU WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING.

BUT TRUST ME...

...YOU DON'T.

"SHOULD WE BE WORRIED?"

I WISH FATHER WOULD TALK TO US.

HE JUST WON'T LET ANYONE IN.

HE'S SO... PREOCCUPIED. SO...

...DISTANT.

I'M SURE IT'S STRANGE FOR YOU, BASIL.

TRUST ME, THOUGH. YOU GET USED TO IT.

WHATEVER HE'S STRUGGLING WITH...

...I'D HELP HIM IF I COULD.

I'VE DREADED THIS DAY FOR SO LONG.

FOR YOU, MOST OF ALL.

REGINALD SAW IT LONG AGO.

EVEN LORELEI REALIZED IT.

BUT NOT YOU.

ALWAYS THE DUTIFUL SON.

HOW IT MUST HURT TO SEE THE VENEER WEAR THIN.

FLAME SCORCHES THE EARTH, LEAVING NOTHING UNCHANGED.

THIS ISN'T ABOUT ARI.

I KNOW YOU THINK IT IS.

MAYBE THAT'S HOW IT SEEMS.

BUT HE'S WORRIED.

ABOUT THE DESCENT.

ABOUT THE WILD MAGICIANS.

ABOUT LEAVING THE FAMILY IN DANGER.

HE LEAVES US IN MORE DANGER BY NOT ACCEPTING THE DESCENT.

HIS TIME IS DONE IN THIS WORLD.

HE MUST CHOOSE A SUCCESSOR... FROM AMONG HIS CHILDREN.

"HE MUST MOVE ON FROM THIS WORLD."

HARVEY? ARE YOU OUT THERE?

GAH!

COME IN, HARVEY.

I'M HERE, JOSIE.

I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU WANTED EVERYONE CHECKING IN REGULARLY WHILE ON PATROL.

THAT'S RIGHT.

WELL... YOU DIDN'T CHECK IN.

SORRY, JOSIE.

LOST TRACK OF TIME.

ARE YOU OUT AT ROMAN BLACK'S PLACE AGAIN?

HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

IT'S MY JOB.

WELL, THAT'S NOT WHERE I AM.

THAT PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

ESME.

TALIA.

WHAT COULD I HAVE DONE?


THE WOODSH













THE TIME OF THE DESCENT IS UPON US.

THE TIME FOR ROMAN TO DIE.

A RITE OF PASSAGE.

DOESN'T THE HOUSE OF FLAME DO SOMETHING SIMILAR?

FLAME MAGICIANS DON'T TEND TO LIVE THAT LONG.

AND THEY DON'T GET MUCH SAY-SO AS TO WHEN IT'S THEIR TIME.

OR THEY DIDN'T...WHEN THEY WERE ALIVE.

IN SOME WAYS THAT MIGHT BE BEST.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOMEONE RESISTS THE DESCENT?

IT'S NOT PRETTY.

MY FATHER IS NOT ACTING LIKE HIMSELF.

HE IS RASH.

HE IS UNPREDICTABLE.

HE IS BEHAVING VERY MUCH LIKE A FLAME MAGE.

THIS IS YOUR TOTEM.

THE SYMBOL OF POWER FOR THE HOUSE OF BLOOD.

I CAN FEEL IT.

THE FLAME TOTEM...

...THE FIRE BURNING INSIDE ME...

...IT'S ALMOST LIKE IT IS COMMUNICATING WITH THE BLOOD.

WHAT IS IT SAYING?

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT.

WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT HER HERE?

HEY--

GET OFF!

GET AWAY FROM ME!

R-REGGIE!

I DON'T THINK..

...YOUR ANCESTORS...

...LIKE ME MUCH!

IT'S LIKE YOU SAID.

BORROWED BLOOD OR NOT.

YOU SIMPLY DON'T BELONG.

FATHER?

I THINK WE SHOULD TALK.

AND DON'T DISMISS WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

THE INFERNALIST KILLED MY SISTERS.

YOUR DAUGHTERS.

THE FLAMES TELL THE TALE.

YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE.

YOU SAID HE CAME TO HELP OUR FAMILY.

TO SAVE US.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I MUST ASK THIS.

DID YOU KNOW?

ARE YOU THAT FAR GONE?

DID YOU BRING THE FLAME MAGE HERE TO DESTROY YOUR OWN--

OH, YES.

YOU!

YOUR FATHER NEEDED ME. HE BEGGED ME. DID YOU KNOW THAT?

HE PLEADED WITH ME TO SAVE HIS HOUSE.

FROM YOU!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

HGGGK!

I NEVER MEANT MY FAMILY ANY HARM!

I HAVE NO DESIGNS ON THE HOUSE OF BLOOD!

YOU TRICKED HIM.

YOU PLAYED WITH HIS MIND.

YOU TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HIS WEAKENED STATE.

HE SHOULD HAVE DESCENDED.

HE SHOULD HAVE PASSED LEADERSHIP TO ONE OF MY SISTERS.

YOU USED HIS MADNESS AGAINST HIM.

KR-KRAKH

NOW.

IT FALLS TO ME.

TO PROTECT THIS HOUSE.

WHERE IS MY FATHER?

M-MY DEAR BOY. DON'T FRET.

HE'S HERE. HE'S--

--RIGHT BEHIND YOU.


BRIAN HURTT
CRICK 21



ARI--
WAIT!

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN!

I SWEAR! I ONLY WANTED--

WHAT, REGGIE? WHAT DID YOU WANT?

WHY WOULD YOU TAKE ME DOWN THERE? WHY WOULD YOU SHOW ME THE BLOOD TOTEM?

I HAD NO IDEA THERE WOULD BE A REACTION LIKE THAT.

I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.

I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GET HURT.

YOU WANTED TO SHOW ME HOW DEEP YOUR BLOOD RUNS.

YOU WANTED ME TO KNOW THAT THE FEW DROPS OF BLOOD ROMAN SHARED WITH ME WOULD NEVER COMPARE TO THE BLOOD YOUR ANCESTORS POURED INTO THAT TOTEM.

YOU WANTED TO SHOW ME THAT I DIDN'T BELONG.

GOOD JOB.

I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOUR BIRTHRIGHT.

I DIDN'T ASK FOR YOUR FAMILY'S BLOOD.

I DIDN'T WANT IT.

BLEED.

YOU--

YOU SHOULDN'T BE AFRAID OF ME.

I'M NOT HERE TO TAKE ANYTHING FROM YOU.

I DON'T WANT WHAT'S YOURS.

I BARELY WANT WHAT'S MINE.

UH--

LEAVE ME ALONE, REGGIE.

YOU HEAR ME?

STAY AWAY FROM ME.

IF YOU DECIDE YOU CAN'T, I WANT YOU TO ASK YOURSELF A QUESTION.

HOW'D THIS PLACE BURN IN THE FIRST PLACE?

AAGGK!

YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR DEPTH, ROMAN.

YOU'VE BEEN AWAY TOO LONG.

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THE ONCOMING DESCENT HAS RIPPED AWAY AT YOUR FATHER'S MIND.

TOO MUCH RESPONSIBILITY. TOO MUCH PRESSURE.

IT THREATENED TO CRUSH HIM.

Y-YOU USED HIM.

MAXIMILIAN CAME TO ME.

HE ASKED FOR MY HELP.

HE NEEDED MY FLAMES TO HOLD THE DESCENT AT BAY.

YOUR FATHER WANTED TO USE FIRE.

JUST AS YOU BLOOD MAGES HAVE ALWAYS USED OTHERS.

I HELPED HIM, THOUGH.

BECAUSE HELPING HIM ONLY HELPED MY--

...

YEEEAAAARRRGH!

SLLSSSSSH

YOU CONVINCED HIM TO KILL MY SISTERS.

YOU WOULD HAVE HAD HIM KILL ME.

SO THAT YOU COULD TURN HIM INTO SOME SORT OF MONSTER.

MRRGGREAAARRG!

RUUHH?

BURN.

YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW.

YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW.

THIS IS ALL WAAAAAAY ABOVE YOUR PAY GRADE.

IF THERE'S SOME HIGHER POWER OUT THERE...

...JUST BE ADVISED THAT I'M ABOUT TO MAKE A U-TURN, DRIVE BACK TO THE CREEPY OLD MANSION, AND HAVE A SIT-DOWN WITH A WIZARD...

...SO IF YOU WANT TO GIVE ME SOME SORT OF SIGN, NOW WOULD BE--

COME IN, SHERIFF.

SKEEET

I'M HERE, JOSIE.

SHERIFF, WE'VE GOT ANOTHER CALL ABOUT THE COUSINS PLACE.

BUNCH OF KIDS ARE OUT THERE CAUSING TROUBLE.

THINK YOU COULD GO TAKE A LOOK?

IF I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, JOSIE...

...I'D SAY YOU WERE THROWING BUSY WORK MY WAY TO KEEP ME OCCUPIED.

IDLE HANDS, SHERIFF.

MAYBE YOU'VE GOT A BIT OF MAGIC, TOO, JOSIE.

GRAAAAGGGGGGH!

FATHER...

CAN'T YOU SEE?

DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT HE WAS DOING TO YOU?

LIVE.

GRRRAAGGH!

YOU'D LIVE, YES.

AS A PUPPET.

AS A PLAYTHING.

FOR THAT LIFE...

...YOU MURDERED ESME...

...YOU MURDERED TALIA.

Y-YOU WEREN'T READY.

THIS IS THE LIFE...

...YOU CHOSE FOR ME.

REAAAGHH!

HM?

EVERYTHING OKAY?

LORELEI?

HEY.

EARTH TO LORELEI.

IS SOMETHING WRONG?

AUSTIN, I'M SORRY.

I KNOW...I'M BEING WEIRD.

AND RUDE.

IT'S JUST...

DO YOU SMELL SOMETHING BURNING?

NNN--

WE'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY OUT!

IF WE DON'T...WE'LL EITHER CHOKE TO DEATH...

...OR WE'LL BURN!

DEIDRE! DON'T--

AHHHHHHHH!

SSSS

IT... BURNS!

JASMINE! THE DOOR! LOOK!

KRAK-K

I CANNOT EXTINGUISH THE FLAME!

I CAN HOLD IT BACK, BUT NOT FOR LONG!

WE MUST GO--NOW!

R-ROMAN.

YOU CAME BACK.

YOU... BLED FOR US.

WE CAN'T STAY.

IT'S ALL COMING DOWN.

EVERYTHING IS...ABLAZE.

REGINALD.

REGGIE.

REGINALD.

WHO'S THERE?

YOU BROUGHT HER BEFORE US.

A FLAME MAGE.

AN INFERNALIST.

A DESTROYER.

I DIDN'T BRING HER HERE!

IT WAS FATHER!

HE WELCOMED HER INTO OUR HOME!

DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED?

THE LAST TIME?

THE LAST TIME A BLOOD MAGICIAN WELCOMED A FLAME MAGE INTO OUR HOUSE?

I...I DON'T.

I MEAN... I KNOW THE OLD HOUSE BURNED.

BUT IF SHE'S SO DANGEROUS, YOU MADE A MESS OF THINGS THROWING HER ABOUT THE WAY YOU DID!

YOUR GRANDFATHER.

HE RESISTED.

RESISTED THE DESCENT.

COMBINED BLOOD AND FIRE.

BLOOD AND FIRE.

HE MADE SACRIFICES.

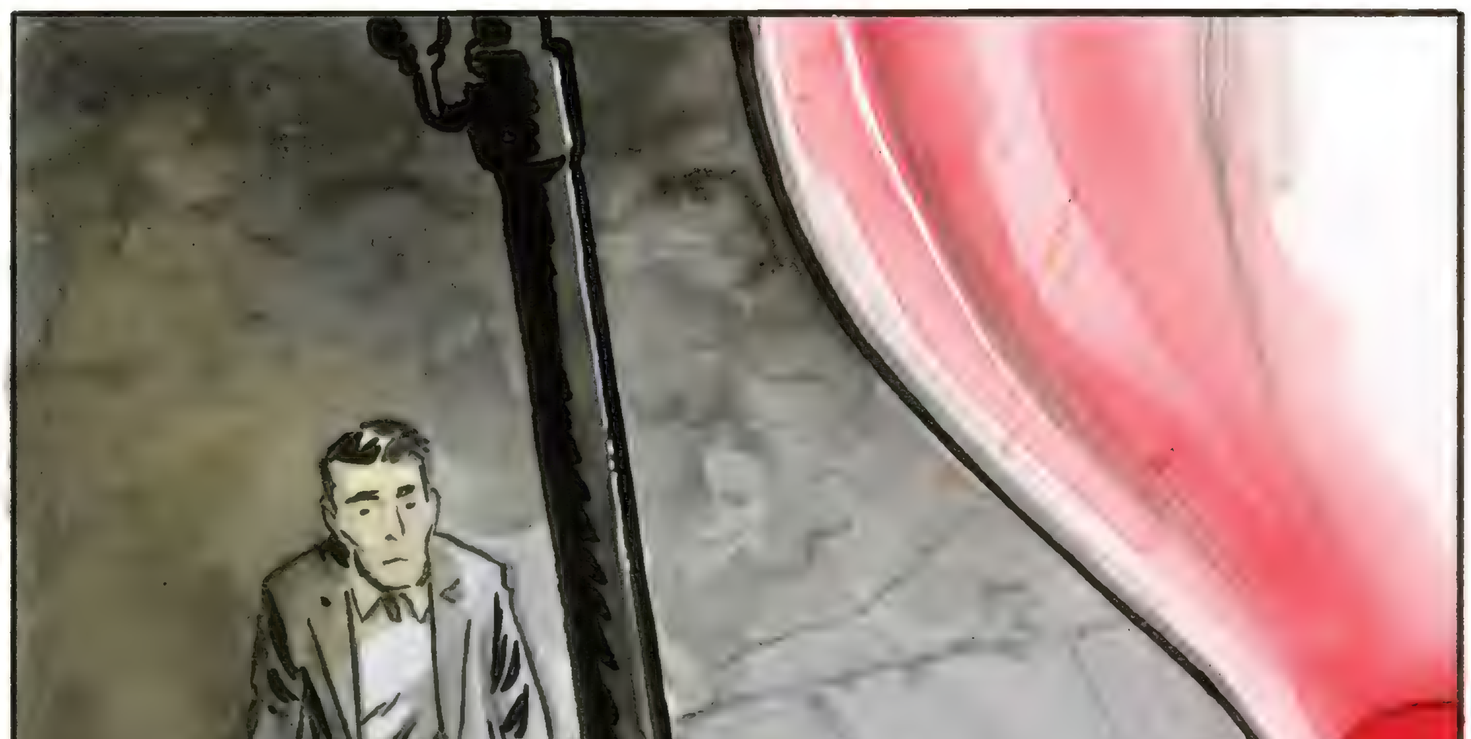
TO GIVE HIMSELF ETERNAL LIFE.

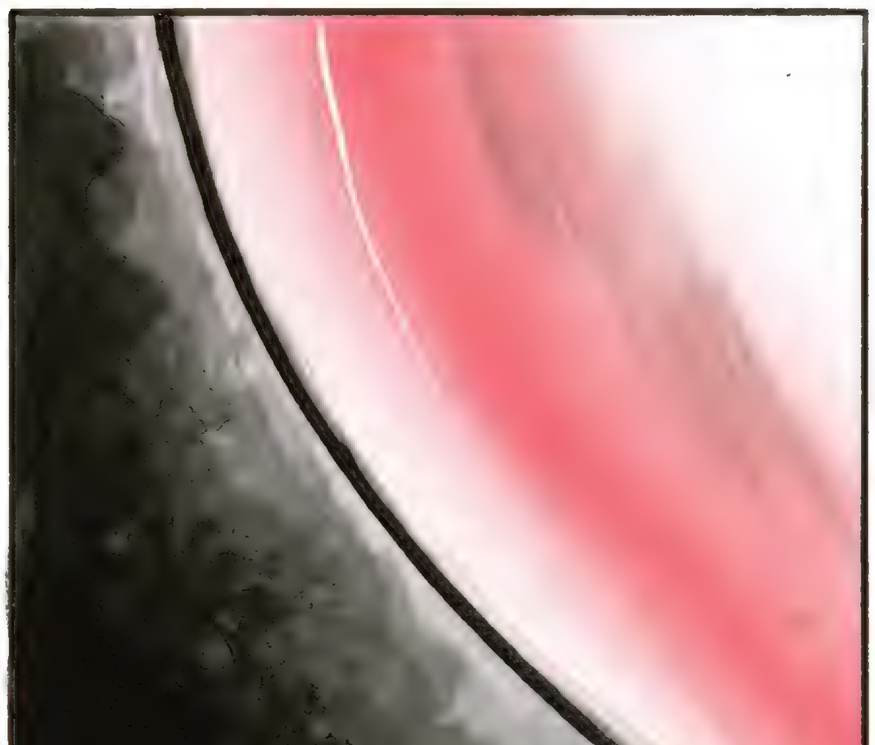
HE MURDERED THEM.

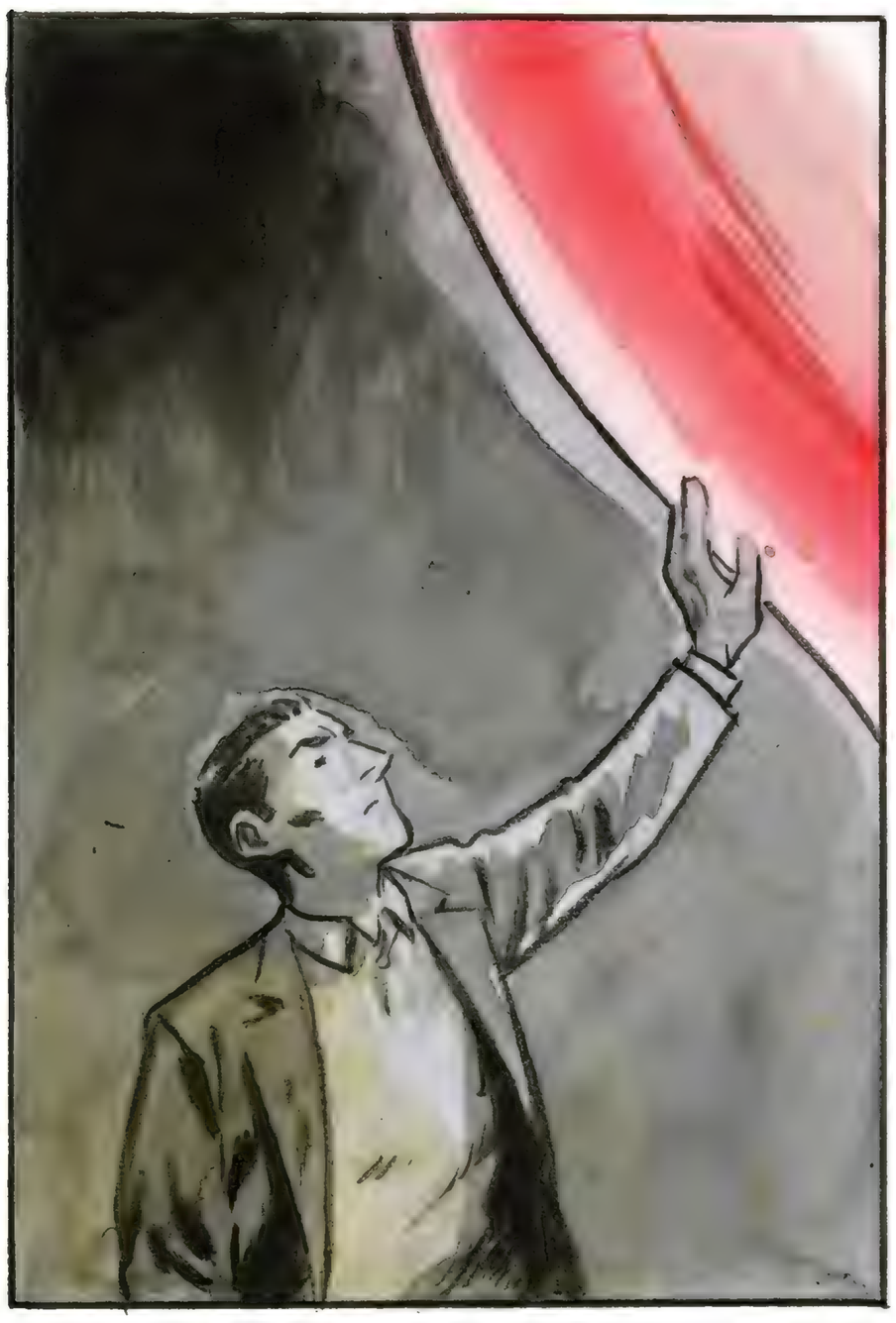
TO AVOID THE INEVITABLE.

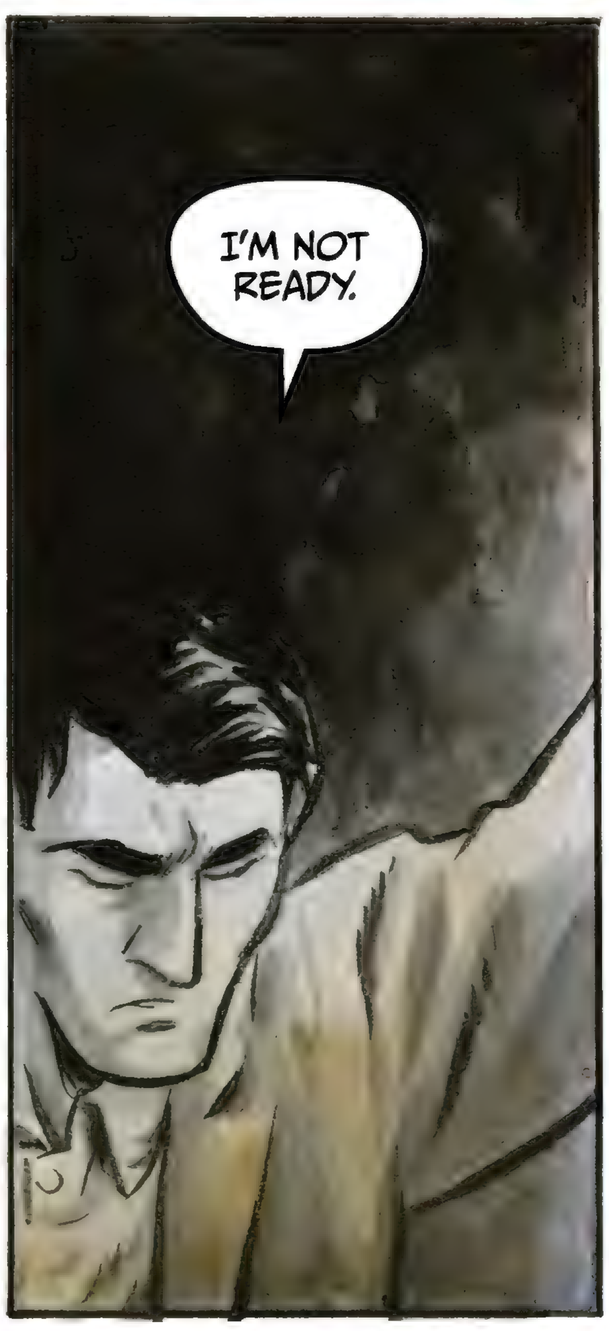
HE KILLED HIS OWN CHILDREN.










I'M NOT READY.



WE LIVE A LONG TIME.

HUNDREDS OF YEARS.

BUT IT'S NEVER ENOUGH.

IT'S MADDENING... HOW LITTLE TIME WE HAVE.

YOU KILLED YOUR DAUGHTERS.

EITHER ONE OF THEM... COULD HAVE SERVED THE HOUSE OF BLOOD...AND SERVED IT WELL.

ESME.

TALIA.

THEY WERE BORN FOR THIS.

BUT YOU KILLED THEM...

...AND NOW YOU'RE STUCK WITH ME.

ONE DAY, MY SON.

PERHAPS YOU'LL UNDERSTAND.

ONE DAY... ONCE THE WEIGHT OF MY LEGACY HAS SETTLED UPON YOU.

YOU'LL KNOW.

SMACK

HAHAHA HAHAHA!

DID YOU SEE THAT? BULLSEYE!

NOT HARDLY! LET ME SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE!

SMAK

THAT'S RIGHT!

WE DON'T WANT YOU HERE!

YOU OLD WITCH!

AH, HELL.

WOOP

WOOP

BRENT DENNINGS!
TOBY GREER!
ANTHONY WILLIAMS!
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU BOYS THINK YOU'RE DOING OUT HERE?!
N-NOTHING, SHERIFF!
WE DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM!
JUST HAVING A BIT OF FUN!
I DOUBT OLD LADY COUSINS THINKS IT'S ALL THAT FUN.
COME ON, SHERIFF!
YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT HER AND HER SON!
HE'S A MONSTER!
SHE'S A WITCH!
A WITCH.
I WANT YOU BOYS TO GET HOME.
YOU'D BEST HOPE MS. COUSINS IS IN A FORGIVING MOOD.
AND DON'T YOU DARE LET ME CATCH YOU OUT HERE AGAIN.

SORRY, SHERIFF!

IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN!

KNOK KNOK

MS. COUSINS?

I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW, I RAN THOSE BOYS OFF.

IF YOU WANT TO PURSUE THE MATTER WITH THEM, I CAN--

NO, THANK, YOU, SHERIFF.

WE'LL JUST LET THE MATTER DROP.

I APPRECIATE THAT, MA'AM.

I DON'T THINK THEY--

SLAM

WELL...HAVE A NICE REST OF YOUR NIGHT.

MAMA?

IT'S ALL RIGHT, BODIE.

THEY'RE GONE.

THEY CAN'T HURT YOU.

I WON'T LET ANYBODY HURT MY BOY.

BUT NOT JUST MY BOY.

EH, ROMAN?

NOT JUST MINE.

OUR BOY.

VARIANT COVER FOR *MANOR BLACK: FIRE IN THE BLOOD* #1 BY
FRANCESCO FRANCAVILLA

MANOR BLACK

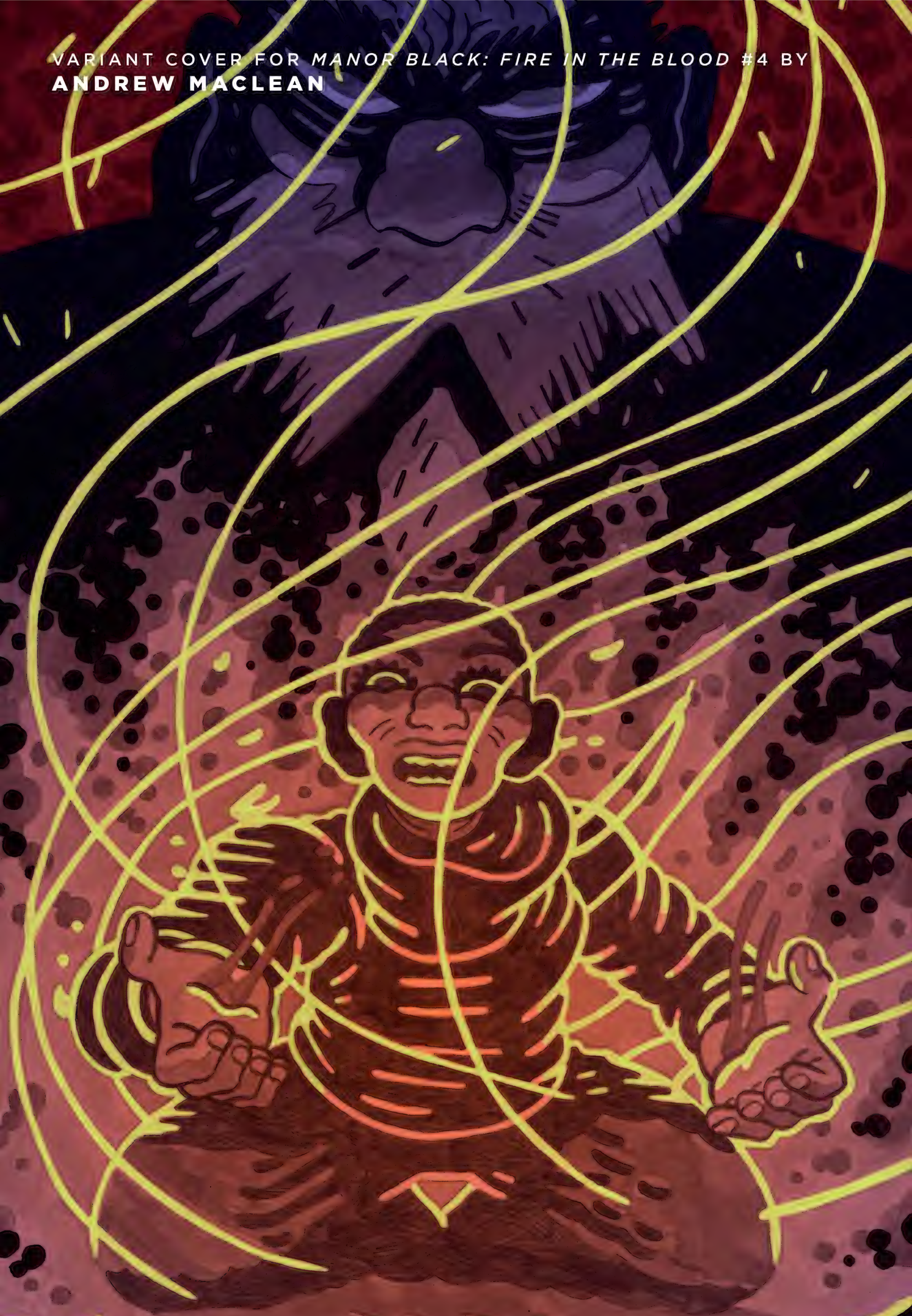
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VARIANT COVER FOR *MANOR BLACK: FIRE IN THE BLOOD* #2 BY
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VARIANT COVER FOR *MANOR BLACK: FIRE IN THE BLOOD* #3 BY
NAOMI FRANQUIZ



VARIANT COVER FOR *MANOR BLACK: FIRE IN THE BLOOD* #4 BY
ANDREW MACLEAN



MANOR BLACK

™

SKETCHBOOK

NOTES BY
TYLER CROOK

This is typically what my desk looked like every morning when I came into the studio. I usually kept the previous day's pages laid out across the top of my desk with the current day's pages ready to be worked on.

I decided early on that the flashbacks would be in black and white except for magical elements like blood, fire, and of course, blood golems.



For this story arc, we decided that Brian would draw the pages and I would color them. Since I don't really do computer coloring, we figured that I should just paint right over Brian's inked pages (pictured below).





If you know anything about comic book production, you might recognize that this is a weird way of working. But I think the resulting pages were really cool looking and I learned a lot from working directly on Brian's art.



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PRAISE FOR *MANOR BLACK*

"THE STORY IS RICHLY ENGAGING AND THERE IS A GREAT SENSE OF DARKNESS THAT DREW ME IN AS A READER. I WAS DRAWN TO THE STORY AND ITS CHARACTERS FROM THE START AND CANNOT WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT."

—THE SUPER POWERED FANCAST

"THERE'S NOTHING CULLEN BUNN WRITES THAT I WON'T LOVE."

—COMICS BOOKCASE

"IT'S THE KIND [OF HORROR] THAT SEEPS INTO YOUR SKIN, MAKING YOU UNCOMFORTABLE TO TURN THE PAGE, BUT FORCING YOU TO GO ON."

—HORROR DNA

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"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"

